Support for families and carers affected by someone else's drug or alcohol use
Why invest?
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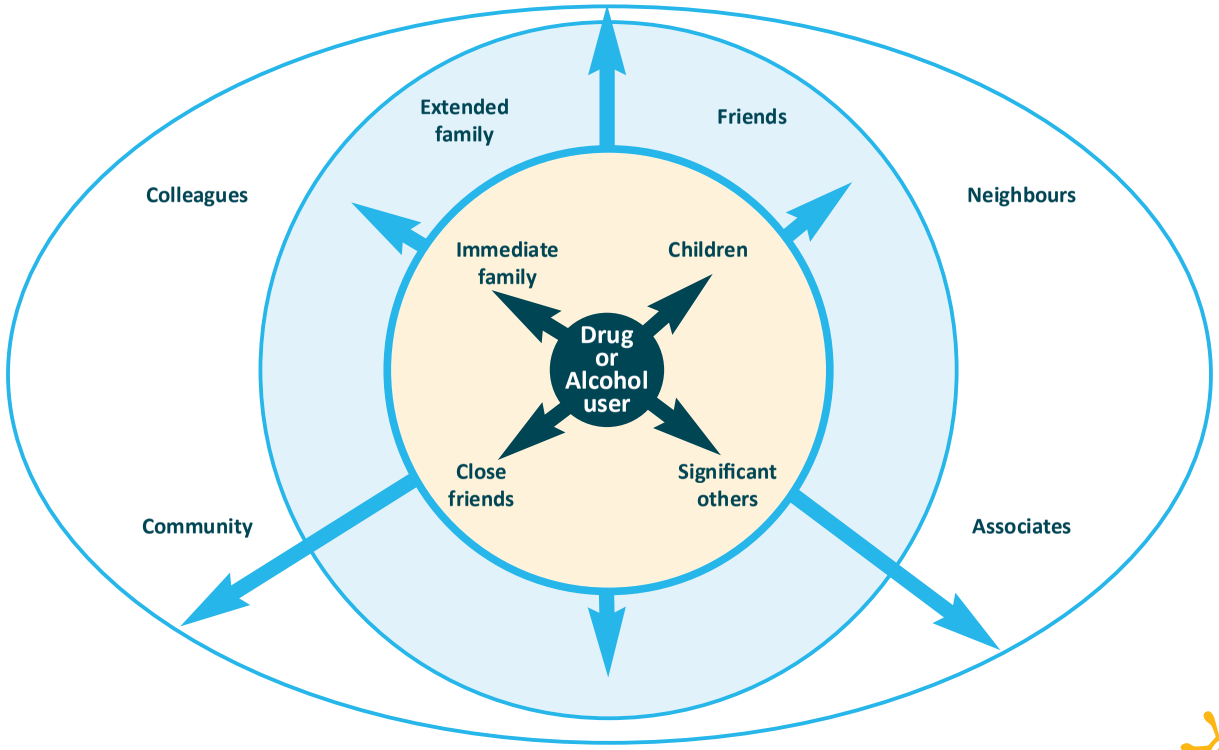
Who is affected?



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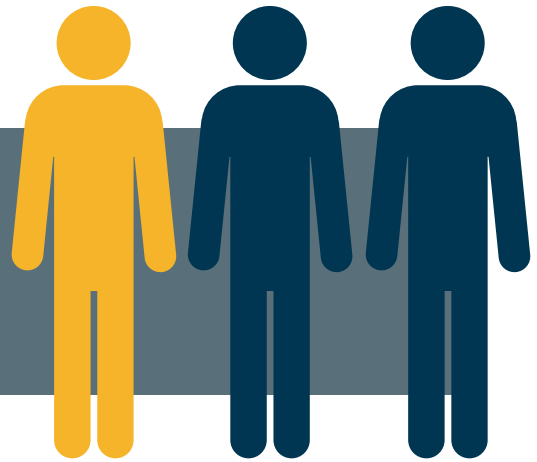
1,500,000

adults are affected by a relative's drug use[1]

Nearly 1 in 3 adults are affected by a relative's alcohol use[2]



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1,000,000

children affected by parental alcohol use[3]

250-350,000

children of problematic drug users[4]

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Impacts on adult family members[5]

Financial Difficulties

- Give money and accumulate debt to prevent their loved one from committing crime to fund their habit
- Difficulty in maintaining work due to stress
- Grandparents or other relatives may face the financial pressure of caring for a young child
- Paying for treatment for their loved one

Physical Health

- Extreme stress can lead to physical health problems and insomnia
- Physical abuse can be experienced from family members, including children, or from external sources such as drug dealers
- Use of tobacco and other substances (including pre scription medication) to cope

Victims of crime

- Money and property stolen
- Strong correlation between the use of drugs and alcohol and domestic abuse. Where this comes from the hands of a child this is particularly traumatic
- Will often not report if they are the victim of crimes
- Threats from drug dealers to pay off their loved one's debts

Emotional stress

- More likely to be diagnosed with depression and other psychological problems
- Grandparents may find themselves looking after a young child who is themselves facing huge difficulties, whilst simultaneously feeling like a failure as a parent to their child

Pressure on family relationships

- Sections of the family may remain unaware of what's happening, creating divisions
- Resentment, guilt, shame, judgment and a lack of trust can lead to a fracturing of relationships and difficulties in family members becoming involved in their loved one's treatment

Isolation

- May not go out, or invite people around because of the unpredictability of their loved one's behavior and the fear of what will happen
- Lose contact with family and friends
- Where grandparents are caring for young children their lives may change significantly from that of their friends, limiting their social opportunities
- Creates additional barriers to accessing support

Pressured into illegal acts

- Buying drugs to 'manage' their loved one's supply
- Physically or emotionally threatened or coerced into bringing drugs or contraband into prison

Stigma

- Don't tell people anything for fear of being judged
- Society makes a judgment and may shun the whole family because someone uses drugs or alcohol
- Whole family labelled as scum, loser, low-life

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The cost of the harm to family members is £1.8 Billion a year[6]

73% of domestic violence offenders used alcohol prior to the offence, with **48%** seen as 'alcohol dependent'[7]

57% of kinship carers gave up work or reduced their hours to take on the care of a child

67% do not get financial support from local authorities for the children other than benefits which would be available to their parents if they still lived with them[8]

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Impacts on children[9]

Emotional Neglect
May be aware that they do not come first in their parents' lives. The drug or alcohol use is at the centre of the family, not the child, which can lead to neglect.

Risk of social care involvement
Strong correlation between social care interventions and parental drug or alcohol use. One study shows that 62% of children subject to care proceedings and 40% of children placed on the child protection register are from families with parental alcohol misuse

Social behaviour & conduct
Heightened emotions can be compounded where parents aren't able to support the child to understand learned emotional responses and appropriate behaviour, leading to conduct problems including aggression, offending, drug & alcohol etc.

Secret Keeping
Parents often don't talk openly to their child about the drug or alcohol use, although children are aware that something is wrong. If they are told, they may be asked to keep it a secret, leading to stress, anxiety and trust issues.

Own relationship with drugs & alcohol
May use substances as a way of connecting with, and understanding, their parents. The use of drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism may be normalised.

Child abuse & dysfunctional family responses
Parental alcohol and drug use is strongly correlated with family conflict and domestic violence and abuse. Children often recognise the links between parental drinking and the presence of conflict, violence and abuse.

Additional responsibilities & role confusion
May have to take on caring roles for other siblings, or for their parents, and may experience confusion when this role changes according to their parents functioning and recovery

Isolation
May be bullied by other children. Where alcohol is involved they may also feel that there is nowhere for them to turn, since the use of alcohol is socially acceptable. They may face constant fear that they will be separated and taken away from their parents.

Education & achievement
School attendance issues, stress, anxiety and behavioural issues may lead to a reduction in educational achievement and aspirations, with the potential for long term economic impact and loss of potential.

Missing out on childhood
May miss out on what might be considered 'normal' childhood experiences and a 'normal' child-parent relationship, with long reaching impacts on their own parenting.

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The care provided to drug users by family members would cost

£747,000,000

per year if it were provided by health and social care providers[10]

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When family members receive support for their own needs…

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This happens to adult family members:[11]

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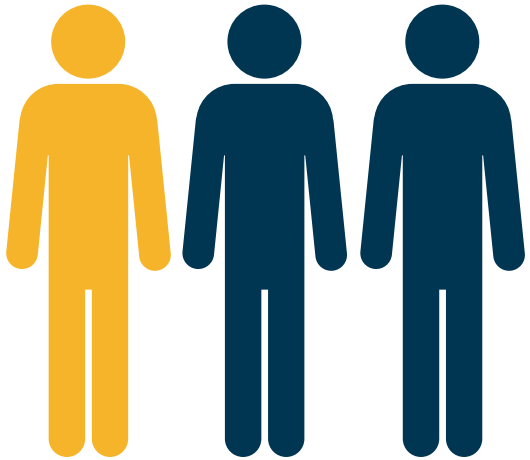
This happens to adult family members:

Reduced Mortality:

Better social relationships can decrease mortality risks.

Individuals with adequate social relationships have a 50% greater likelihood of survival compared to those with poor social relationships.[12]



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This happens to children:[13]

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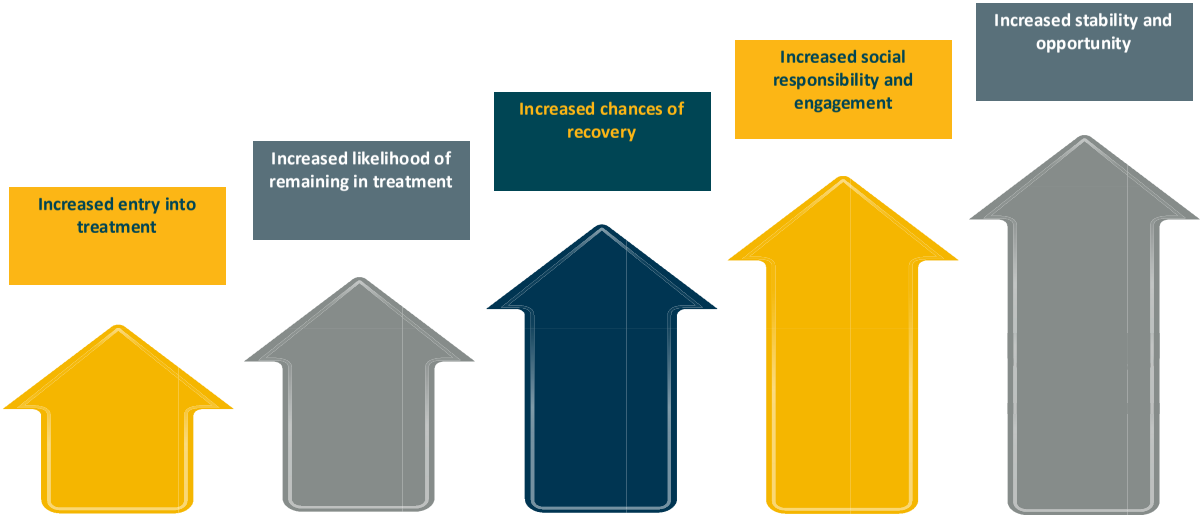
This happens to the drug or alcohol user:



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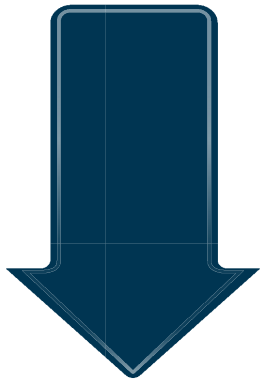
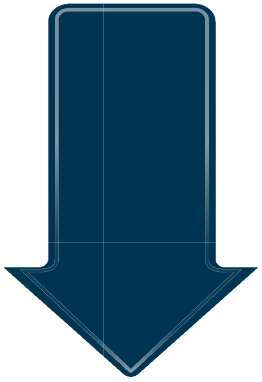
This happens to the community and state:[14]



26% reduction in use of the criminal justice system



28% reduction in use of the NHS by both the family member and the drug or alcohol user

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This happens to the community and state:[15]

Every £1 invested

Gives £4.70 in social value

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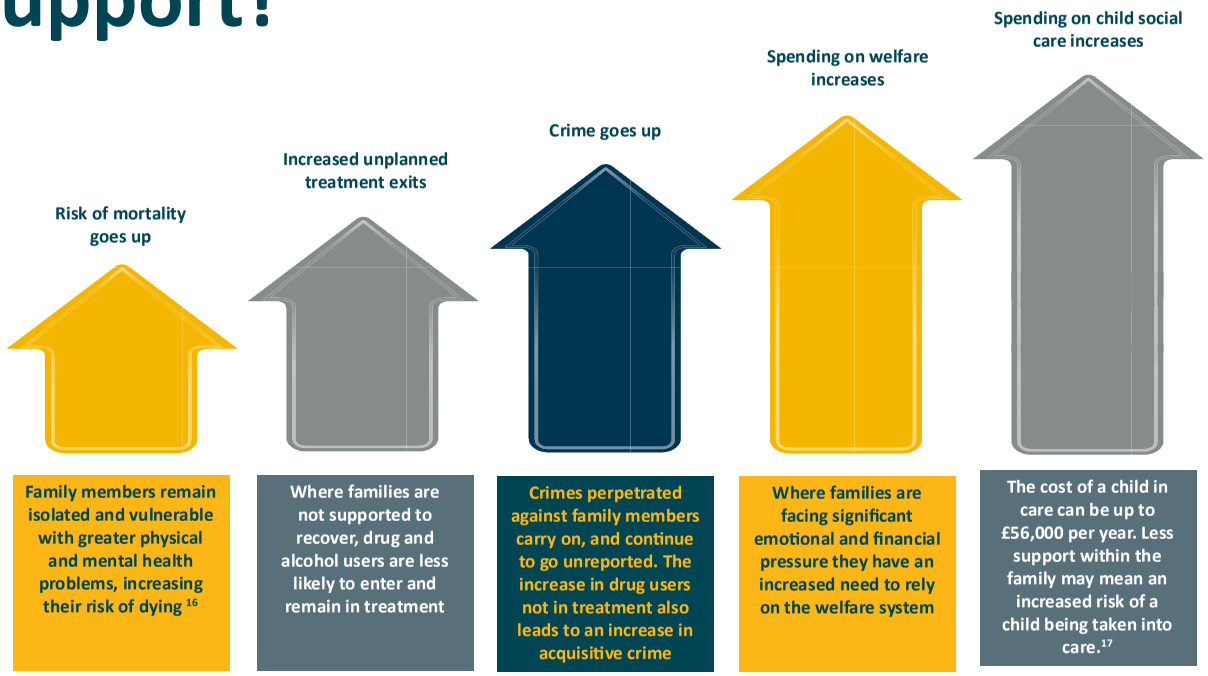
What happens without family support?



So why spend on family support?

It builds stronger and safer communities

- Reduced crime and criminal justice spending
- Increased understanding and decreased stigma across the community
- Troubled families stabilised

It protects public health

- Reduces social isolation
- Reduces severe physical and mental health impacts
- Reduces the burden on the NHS

It helps drug users overcome addiction

- Increases the number of drug and alcohol users entering treatment
- Families become an effective and central part of a drug or alcohol users recovery

It helps the next generation

- Increases resilience and ability to deal with change
- Children achieve more

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Effective investment in family support can give you a service that...[18]

- Offers a free and accessible service to all, regardless of the treatment status of their loved one
- Offers a discreet, confidential and safe space, just for families
- Provides a non-judgemental and caring approach
- Has staff who are well trained and supported, and receiving regular clinical supervision
- Involves family members in the design and development of the service
- Offers choice and flexibility to provide families with support that meets their needs
- Supports family members to look after themselves
- Supports the families role in the drug or alcohol users' recovery
- Has clear boundaries, understanding what they can offer and where to refer clients onto for additional support

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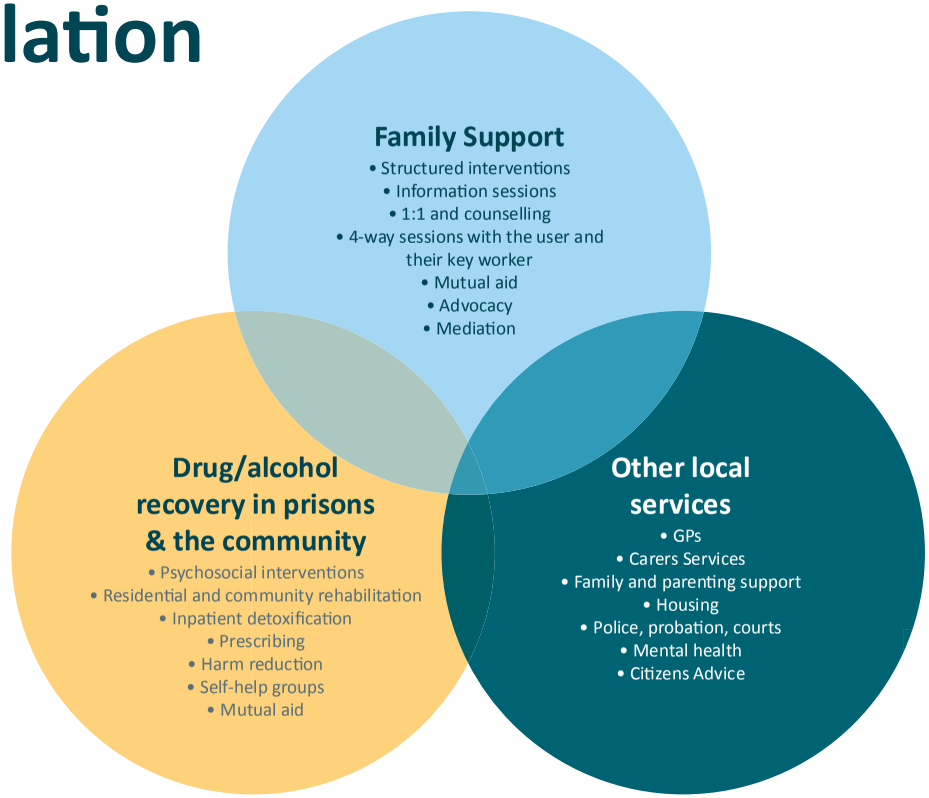
Family support cannot work in isolation



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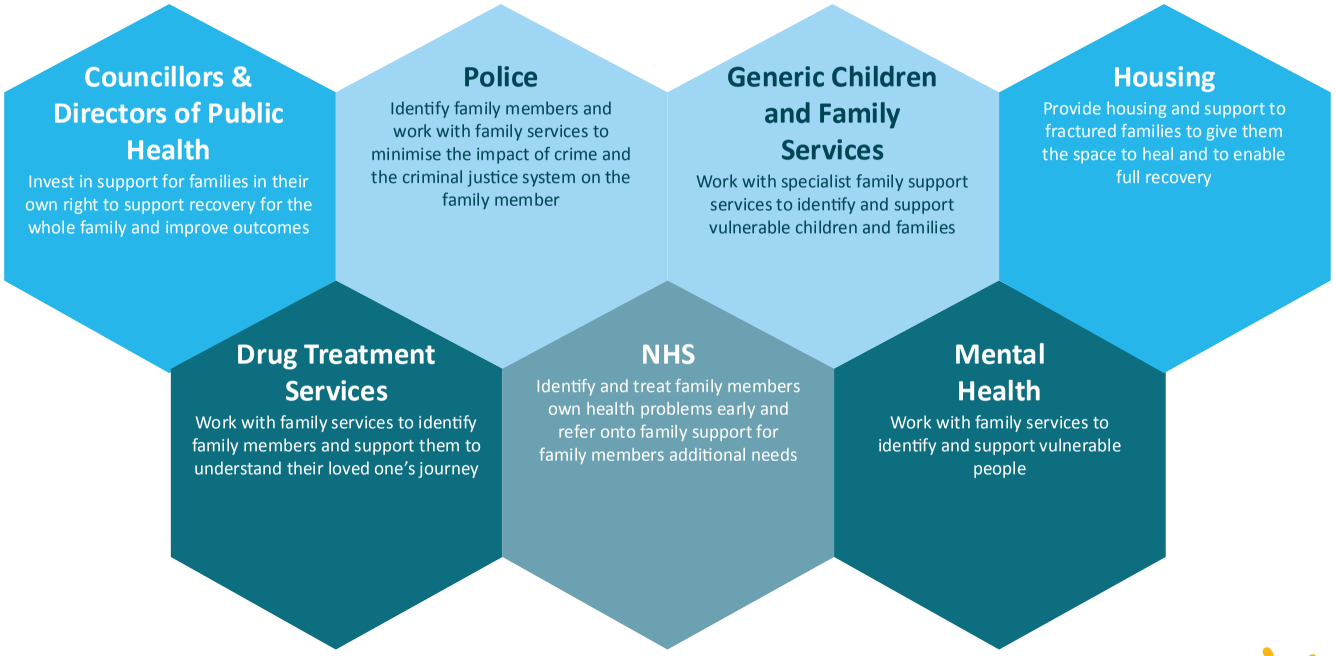
Everyone has a part to play



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Find out more at www.adfam.org.uk

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